

**HISTORIC RESEARCH REPORT**  
**FOR THE**  
**DESIGNATION OF OBERLIN VILLAGE DISTRICT**  
**AS A**  
**HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICT**

prepared for the

**City of Raleigh**

By

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Raleigh

December 13, 2016, revised April 19, 2017

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

## **Summary**

The Oberlin Village Historic Overlay District encompasses approximately seventeen and one-half acres in West Raleigh, North Carolina. The boundary encompasses the village center along both sides of the 800-1000 blocks of Oberlin Road, the spine of the district. It also includes a portion of three side streets on the west side of the road: two blocks of Bedford Avenue, a portion of one block of Roberts Street, and a portion of two blocks of Van Dyke Avenue. One lot with a Tower Street address and one lot with a Chamberlain Street address are included. Two sites, Oberlin Cemetery, 1014 Oberlin Road and the Latta House and Latta University Site, 1001 Parker Street, are also included. The boundary omits one modern office building at 801 Oberlin Road and a sizeable vacant tract at 913 Oberlin Road because they do not contribute to the district's historic significance. The period of historic significance begins in 1873 (establishment of Oberlin Cemetery) and ends 1970 when Oberlin Graded School, 1012 Oberlin Road, was demolished and the village began to lose its identity.

Of the 49 resources in the Oberlin Village District (excluding secondary structures and vacant lots), 34 are contributing resources (that is they were built during the period of significance 1873-1970 and retain architectural integrity). Two secondary buildings are also contributing resources. Fifteen buildings and five secondary buildings do not contribute to the district, either because they were built after 1970 or have lost integrity through alteration. The majority of contributing

resources are single-family residential. Other resource types consist of two churches, one store, a cemetery, and the site of a late 1800s college.

Contributing dwellings are one, story-and-a-half, or two stories in height. They are of frame or brick construction with side-gable, front-gable, or hip roofs. Brick is the most common material for foundations, chimneys, and flues. Pre-World War II houses were built with porches, which generally survive, although often modified. Porch posts and columns are usually of wood or a combination of brick and wood (as with most Craftsman bungalows). After World War II, deteriorated porch posts and columns were sometimes replaced with decorative metal supports. Windows come in a variety of double-hung sash arrangements, metal casements, or sliding glass windows. Doors sometimes have sidelights and/or transoms.

The district preserves numerous landscape features of a typical rural, African American village-- narrow streets with no sidewalks and a variety of lot sizes and shapes due to the piecemeal subdivision of the original sizeable one to two-acre homestead lots of the late 1800s. Small shotguns, tri-gable houses, and bungalows with small front yards are set close to the street. The final phase of historic dwellings were constructed in the two decades after World War II. Young black professional couples built these Tudor Revival, Minimal Traditional, Ranch and Split Level style houses, primarily of brick, set close to the street. The district is heavily wooded with mature hardwood shade trees, pecan trees, shrubbery, flower beds and yard areas that perpetuate the historic landscape. One short unpaved lane--

Glover Lane (originally named Turner Lane) still exists in the district. Cemetery Road, the access from Oberlin Road to Oberlin Cemetery, still exists on the tax map but is been obstructed by uneven terrain, electricity poles and mechanical equipment, the result of encroachments by neighboring property owners since ca. 2000.

### **Boundary Justification**

All buildings along Oberlin Road included in the district boundary are historic, with the exception of two modern buildings at 1012 and 1018 Oberlin Road. Along the side streets of Bedford, Roberts, and Van Dyke, all dwellings are historic with the exception of new infill construction at 700 Tower Street, 2304 and 2310 Bedford Avenue, and 2208-2214 Van Dyke Avenue. In order to link contributing buildings into a contiguous district, three vacant tracts are included: 701, 818, and 910 Oberlin Road.

### **Integrity Statement**

The Oberlin Village District retains a remarkable level of integrity in spite of the fact that its built environment created from the 1870s to the 1960s has been engulfed by the city of Raleigh since 1970. The district's historic street layout is intact and its pattern of development during the period of significance remains essentially intact. Although the boundary is convoluted, the streetscape along Oberlin Road retains the overall character of a historic village because of the five Raleigh Historic Landmarks, one church and four dwellings, that still stand. In

addition, two Raleigh Historic Landmarks are situated just off Oberlin Road: Oberlin Cemetery and the Latta House and Latta University Site. Although annexed to Raleigh in 1920, Oberlin remained a distinct segregated district until after World War II, when construction of Cameron Village, a commercial, office, apartment, and single family development east of the village, did not physically encroach but altered its quiet atmosphere. The demolition of Oberlin Graded School about 1970 led to the construction of the YWCA on its site about 1974. This large modern concrete building with a swimming pool annex and large paved parking lot is the most intrusive change to Oberlin Village. Although not within the boundary, the second most intrusive property is the York Properties office building, a three-story brick structure of late twentieth-century modern style built about 1984 at 801 Oberlin Road.

The district boundaries abut some historic fabric and some post-1970 commercial development. It is bordered on the west by the Mayview Public Housing complex and sections of the West Raleigh National Register Historic District (NR-2003); on the north by modern commercial development and the Wade Avenue expressway; on the east by the Occidental Life Insurance Company Building (National Register, 2003) and apartment complexes; and on the south by modern commercial development.

## Oberlin Village Inventory List

**Arrangement:** The list is arranged alphabetically by street name, north side and east side first. **Source of construction date:** Dates were determined by the following Raleigh City Directories: 1930 (the first full listing of Oberlin Village); 1935, 1940, 1945-6; 1949, 1955, 1959, 1961, and 1965. **Historic house names** are derived from the original occupant, as determined by city directories. When a hyphenated name is assigned, it represents an original occupant and a long-term later occupant. **Contributing or noncontributing status:** All resources that date from 1873-1970 are historic resources that contribute to the district's character unless they have undergone character-altering changes or additions that affect their physical integrity. Whether a historic resource is contributing or noncontributing to the district was assessed according to five criteria that were developed for an analysis of the district potential of Raleigh's College Park-Idlewild neighborhood. The five criteria are integrity of roofline, trim, windows, exterior wall cladding, and porches. Resources that possess integrity for at least three of the five criteria are classified as contributing to a district. An additional criterion is used by the SHPO to assess the contributing status of historic resources that have been moved into an area from elsewhere. Whether the resources were threatened in the original location and whether they are compatible with their new context are considerations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Little, "College Park/Idlewild," 2-3; Ann V. Swallow email to Dan Pezzoni, February 17, 2010.

**Status: C= contributing resource built between 1873 and 1970 and retains its architectural or landscape character.**

**NC-age = noncontributing resource because it was built after 1970.**

**NC-alt. = built between 1873 and 1870 but has significant alterations and/or additions.**

**Status ---Street Address---Name---Date**

**Bedford Avenue, north side**

**C      2206 Bedford Ave. Claude and Carrie Morgan House. Early 1900s.**

One-story frame tri-gable house with some original 6/6 wood sash windows, a three-quarter porch with replacement wood columns and a tile porch floor, and aluminum siding over the original wood siding. The original decorative Victorian wood door has flanking paneled pilasters. Claudius (Claude) W. Morgan, a grandson of Wilson Morgan, and his wife Carrie bought the house about 1940 and made their home here throughout the rest of their lives. The earlier residents are not known. Claude was a bricklayer employed in construction of Cameron Village in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Their daughter Joyce Morgan, who grew up here, returned home in the early 1980s and has lived here since then. (Joyce Morgan interview, Nov. 6, 2016; Mabel Patterson interview, Nov. 18, 2016; 1940s Raleigh City Directories.)

**C      2208 Bedford Ave. John H. Banks House. Ca. 1960.**

The small intact side-gabled brick Ranch has a central recessed entrance, a mid-century modern picture window with three fixed panes with lower awning windows to the right, and, at left, two awning windows with two large upper panes. Under each of these windows is a paneled wood apron. At the right side is an exterior brick chimney; at the left side a half-height brick wall extends a few feet beyond the corner. John H. Banks owned and resided here in 1965. It is currently owned by Catherine Lundy. (Raleigh City Directory, 1965).

**NC-alt.      2210 Bedford Ave. Arthur and Lina Dunston House. Ca. 1925.**

The small one-story front-gabled frame bungalow has a central entrance and flanking replacement vinyl sash windows. The original hipped porch has brick piers and battered wood posts, with a replacement concrete floor. A recent rehabilitation replaced the siding and added a one-bay side addition. Arthur Dunston, a janitor, and his wife Lina were in residence in 1930. During the 1940s Lina, a widow, owned and resided here and worked as a maid. (Raleigh City Directory 1940, 1945-6, 1949)

**C      2212 Bedford Ave. Mrs. Mary A. Jones House. Ca. 1960.**

The small side-gabled brick Ranch has a recessed entrance, a sliding wood picture window to the right, and two wood awning windows set into a frame wall above a wood shake wainscot to the left. The first awning window has four large panes; the other has two panes. There is an interior brick chimney. Mrs. Mary A. Jones lost her home when Wade Avenue was constructed through Oberlin Village in the late



1950s. She had this house built and resided here until her death. Her heirs now own the property. (1961 Raleigh City Directory; Joe Holt interview, Nov. 13, 2016)

**NC-age      2304 A, B, C, D Bedford Ave. Four-plex. 1970s.**

This four-unit apartment building, a two-story side-gabled frame structure, has small entrance porches at the north end of the east façade and the north end of the west façade. Walls have artificial weatherboard; windows are the large metal sliding glass type. The building occupies the site of the Grandison Turner House (1949 plat map, Wake County Book Of Maps 47, 588).

**C      2306 Bedford Ave. Peter Thornton House. Ca. 1910s.**

The one-story tri-gable frame house appears on a 1949 plat map (Wake County Book of Maps 47, 588) as the property of the Thornton heirs. The intact house has plain siding, boxed eaves with wide eave returns, original 2/2 vertical wood sashes, and a front decorative cross-gable. Diamond wood louvered vents are centered in the side and front gables. The hipped porch has replacement posts and a concrete floor. To the rear is a one-story frame addition with rear screen porch and deck. Peter Thornton, a clerk at Samuel Gill, owned the house and resided here in the 1940s, but by 1949 William E. Manley, a driver with Deluxe Taxi, and his wife Martha lived here. This is one of four surviving early twentieth-century tri-gable houses in the district. (1940s Raleigh City Directories).

**NC-age        2310 Bedford Ave. Jeff and Christy Mastrangelo House.**

The two-story hipped-roof frame house with an inset two-story porch was constructed for the Mastrangelos in 2014 on the footprint of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century house. Windows have 6/6 vinyl sashes.

**NC-Shed.** ca. 1990. Shed-roof side-gable shed with concrete siding on walls.

**C        2312 Bedford Ave. John V. and Roberta Parham House. 1966.**

Cauthen Realty and Construction Company built this mid-century modern Split-Level house for John V. and Roberta Parham, apparently from a mail order plan. This is the most stylish mid-century modern-style house in Oberlin Village. Unlike most Split-Levels, the asymmetrical front-gable two-bay-wide brick house is placed at a right angle to the street, with the lower entrance level on a concrete slab, the middle level to the left, and the upper bedroom level above the entrance level. The recessed original double-door entrance has a large frosted glass sidelight and a concrete-floored porch. All windows are original wood windows. The left façade bay has a large four-pane picture window. The left side elevation has a large two-pane picture window with lower awning windows. Remaining windows are 2/2 horizontal wood sashes. The upper façade and upper right elevations have original board-and-batten siding. To the right is an attached side-gabled carport with an outer brick wall with original wood posts. In front of the façade picture window is a brick planter, and a curved brick wall encloses a planting area beside the front sidewalk. John Parham was the business manager of Shaw University; his wife Roberta was a schoolteacher.

They owned the house until the late 1990s. (Raleigh City Directories: 1966-1997; Marie Hall interview, Nov. 18, 2016.)

**NC Shed.** 2007. Shed-roofed plywood shed with double door and two windows.

**C 2314 Bedford Ave. Lucas House. ca. 1964.**

The small intact side-gabled brick and frame Raised Ranch with wide boxed overhanging eaves has a full basement entered from the rear. Original 2/2 horizontal wood sash windows flank the central entrance. The house was listed as “vacant” in the 1965 Raleigh City Directory. Lonzino Lucas, a black man from Chicago who had served in the military, and his wife Olivia had the house built. Since 1971 Agnes B. Smith has been the owner-occupant. (Wake County Real Estate website, 11-17-16; Agnes Smith interview, Nov. 6, 2016).

**C 2316 Bedford Ave. James Moore Parker House. 1950s.**

The small hip-roofed one-story frame house has a central entrance with a bracketed shed canopy, original German siding, an interior brick chimney, and 1/1 replacement vinyl sash windows. The earliest deed known was to James Moore Parker and Charles G. Irving and wife in 1940. It does not appear on the 1950 Sanborn Map. (Wake County Real Estate website, 11-17-16).

**NC-Shed.** ca. 1990. Prefab plywood “Leonard” shed.

**NC-Shed.** ca. 1990. Prefab metal carport.

### **Bedford Avenue, south side**

#### **NC-alt. 2213 Bedford Ave. Jefferson Stanley House. Late 1920s.**

The one-story gable-and-wing frame house has an interior brick chimney and wide overhanging boxed eaves. A few original 6/6 wood sash windows remain on the left side elevation; the rest have been replaced. The front porch has been enclosed and the house is now a rental. Jefferson Stanley resided here in 1930; in the 1940s Harry and Gertrude Ligon resided here. Stanley was a laborer who served in the Armed Services in 1945-1946. (1930-1945-6 Raleigh City Directories).

**C      Shed.** ca. 1940. Front-gable shed with a front door, side window, and exposed rafter tails.

#### **C      2215 Bedford Ave. Luther and Lettie Chavis House. 1920s.**

The narrow, two-bay-wide front gable frame house of shotgun form has a hipped front porch with replacement wood posts. It features boxed eaves, asbestos wall shakes, and replacement 2/2 horizontal wood sash windows. It sits close to the street on a brick pier foundation with concrete block infill. The porch was likely rebuilt when the street was paved. Luther Chavis, a laborer, and his wife Lettie resided here in 1930. (1930 Raleigh City Directory).

### **Chamberlain Street, east side**

#### **C 710 Chamberlain Street. Delma and Marie Hall. 1962.**

A contractor named Cox who worked for E. N. Richardson, developer of North Hills Shopping Center, built this house for Delma and Marie Hall. They chose the plan from among the houses built in the North Hills subdivision. Delma was the son of Frank and Susie Hall and grandson of Plummer T. Hall. Delma worked as a medical technician at the Durham VA Hospital; Marie worked as a research technician in the Duke University biochemistry department. The one-story brick Ranch, four bays wide, is side-gabled, with a central recessed entrance and all original wood windows. To the right of the entrance is a multi-pane wood picture window with 4/4 flanking wood sashes. Other windows are 6/6 wood sashes. A double set of wood sash windows left of the entrance have paneled wood aprons. The rear wing with screen porch was added about 1990. Marie Hall is the current resident. (Marie Hall interview, Nov. 16, 2016).

### **Oberlin Road: west side:**

**VL 701 Oberlin Road.** Located between Bedford Avenue and Roberts Street.

#### **C 901 Oberlin Road. Community Grocery. Pre-1914.**

The small one-story frame store, three bays wide and three bays deep, has a gable-on-hip roof in the front and a regular gable in the rear. It is the last surviving historic store in the district. The front corner facing Van Dyke Avenue has an angled corner with a cut-away roof that contains a sliding window for takeout food. The front

metal and glass double door is a recent replacement. All windows are either sliding type or fixed glass. Walls have replacement wood siding. The front gable has a louvered wood vent; the rear has a diamond-shape louvered vent. At the rear is a small gabled wood-sided addition. City directories reveal a succession of proprietors: 1930: Ligon & Grant soft drinks (Harry Ligon and Robert Grant were the African American owners); 1935: store was vacant; 1940: Herman Starling, an African American, ran a confectionary here; 1945 and 1949: James T. Goodson, an African American grocer, owned it. Beginning in the 1950s, A. J. Jeffries, a white man, ran the store for many years. More recently it was the "Community Grocery," but is now the "Community Deli," and owned by Robbie Troxler. (Raleigh City Directories 1930-1949; Joe Holt Jr. typescript, Oct. 25, 1991 (copy in file).

**C      903 Oberlin Road. House. Ca. 1923.**

This is one of three similar 1-story side-gabled frame bungalows likely built as speculative houses. The 1945-6 and 1949 city directories show the owners as Garfield and Etta Rochelle. The house retains a nearly full façade porch with brick piers supporting battered wood posts, an interior brick chimney, gable end louvered wood vents, and a shed dormer window. Renovations include replacement plywood siding, replacement **wood?** sash windows, and a front picture window.

**C      905 Oberlin Road. Hubert and Mildred Scarver House. Ca. 1923**

One of three similar bungalows likely built as speculative houses. The intact one-story side-gable bungalow has original wood siding, 4/1 Craftsman-style wood sash

windows, a shed porch with tapered boxed wood posts, and a gabled dormer with original fixed Craftsman style windows. Each gable end has a pointed arch louvered wood vent. Seaton Turner bought the house as an investment about 1923. His daughter, Mildred Turner Scarver and her husband Hubert moved in about 1938 and remained during their lives. Hubert worked at College Pharmacy and later at Edwards Grocery on Hillsboro Street. Mildred was a domestic. Their daughter Mabel Patterson, a retired teacher, lives here. (Mabel Patterson interview, Nov. 18, 2016)

**C      907 Oberlin Road. James and Essie Phillips House. Ca. 1923.**

One of three similar bungalows likely built as speculative housing. The intact one-story side-gable bungalow retains its plain wood siding, 4/1 Craftsman-style wood sash windows, and its gabled dormer with a pair of six-pane casement windows and exposed rafter tails. Each gable end has a pointed arch louvered wood vent. The porch has replacement concrete block piers with rounded corners supporting 6 x 6 wood posts. By 1949 it was owned by James and Essie Phillips. James was employed by well-known Raleigh architect W. H. Deitrick. (1949 Raleigh City Directory)

**C      909 Oberlin Rd. Hubert Jeffries House. ca. 1948.**

In the 1930s and 1940s Hubert Jeffries owned this house. He was a laborer in 1935, a plasterer in 1940, a grave digger at Oberlin Cemetery in 1945-6, and a bricklayer in 1949. The small, one-story frame side-gabled dwelling has German siding, 2/2 horizontal wood sash windows, a concrete block foundation, an interior block

chimney flue, and a small shed entrance porch with replacement wood posts. The house appears on the 1950 Sanborn Map.

**C      1001 Oberlin Road. Dolly Nowell House. Pre-1914**

The one-story frame house is one of four early twentieth-century tri-gable houses in the district. It has plain siding, boxed eaves with molded eave returns, pointed-arch wood louvered vents in the front and side gable ends, and two brick chimneys set inside the rear wall. The windows are recent vinyl replacements, probably for 4/4 wood sashes. The 1914 Sanborn Map shows a detached kitchen in the rear where an attached wing now stands. Dolly Nowell owned the house from at least 1930 to 1949. In later years John V. Turner owned it as a rental property. (Cheryl Turner Williams interview, Oct. 23, 2016).

**C      1011 Oberlin Road. Robert and Gladys Turner House. Ca. 1958.**

Robert Turner, who worked for the Employment Security Commission, and his wife Gladys, a schoolteacher, had this house built about 1958. The one-story brick Ranch, five bays wide and five bays deep, has a hipped roof, wide overhanging eaves, a large interior brick chimney, and a variety of metal casement windows. The façade features a polygonal bay window at one corner and a front recess with metal casements and a stone planter below. The house is currently a rental duplex. (1959 Raleigh City Directory; Joe Holt Jr. interview)



**NC-alt. 1015 Oberlin Rd. James S. Morgan House, ca. 1900. Raleigh Historic Landmark, 1995.**

The two-story side-gable frame I-House is said to have been built by Wilson Morgan for his son James about 1900. James's wife Rosa operated a grocery store at the corner of the lot; it has been demolished. James deeded it to his granddaughter Claudia Johnson at his death in the 1930s. The house retains original 6-over-6 wood sash windows on the north side. The side gables and decorative center cross-gable have diamond-shape louvered vents. The original full façade porch has a replacement concrete floor and brick piers supporting decorative iron posts. Original porch posts were likely to have been wooden. The remaining windows have replacement 1-over-1 vinyl sash. The two-story rear wing may be original, but the two-story porch along the south side has been enclosed. The rear bay of the wing appears to be an addition. (Joe Holt interview; Raleigh Historic Landmark report, Kitty Houston, 1995, revised by April Montgomery, 2008).

**C Shed. 1950s.** 1-story concrete block shed with a front door.

**C 1019 Oberlin Rd. Arthur and Minnie Williams House. ca. 1948.**

Arthur B. Williams, who taught industrial education at Washington School, and his wife Minnie Turner Williams, a first grade teacher at Oberlin School, had this house built about 1948. The one-and-one-half-story brick and stone Tudor Revival-style house has a steep side-gable roof with two large front-gabled dormer windows. The central front-gabled entrance bay, veneered with stone, contains a round-arched

glazed and paneled door with a fanlight. All windows are large metal casements. The north side has an angled bay window. To the south is an attached gabled wing with metal casements, a double glass door in the side elevation, and a large exterior brick chimney at the rear. This may have been an early den addition and is a contributing feature. The rear features a corner window, a large shed dormer, and a small centered porch. The house has a basement, a rarity in Oberlin village. (1955 Raleigh City Directory; Joe Holt Jr. interview.)

**C      1021 Oberlin Rd. Wilson Temple Methodist Church Parsonage, ca. 1964.**

The one-story side-gable brick parsonage has a full shed porch with a concrete floor and decorative metal posts and railing. The front door and the main block windows are replacements. To the rear is an original one-bay gabled wing that was enlarged a few years later with a three-bay deep brick extension with a large exterior chimney, 2-over-2 horizontal wood sash windows, and a rear door with a gabled entrance porch with decorative metal posts and railing. The parsonage abuts a narrow paved driveway separating it from the church on the north. The original two-room parsonage on this site was enlarged and remodeled in 1914 and again in 1964 to create the present dwelling. (1971 Wilson Temple UMC typescript history in Wilson Temple Survey File, SHPO).

**C      1023 Oberlin Rd. Wilson Temple Methodist Church. 1910-1911, 1955.  
Raleigh Historic Landmark, 1993.**

In 1869 a Methodist Church congregation organized in Oberlin and erected a frame sanctuary on land donated by local brickmason Wilson Morgan about 1874.

Sometime after 1876 the church was renamed Wilson Temple Methodist Church in his honor. By 1899 the congregation contained ninety members. In 1910 -1911 the current brick church replaced the original frame building. The 1910-11 church building consists of a Gothic Revival-style brick building with a cross-gabled sanctuary with two façade entrances. It is set on a raised basement containing a kitchen and fellowship hall. The façade cross-gable and the north and south cross-gables have identical sets of windows: a tall center double Gothic-arched window with flanking single Gothic-arched windows, each with an arched brick surround. The main entrance in the north bay of the façade is a double paneled wood door with a Gothic-arched tympanum bearing the name "Wilson Temple Methodist Church." Above this is a crenellated two-story bell tower, a replacement for the original steeple destroyed in 1954 by Hurricane Hazel. A secondary entrance, a single wood paneled door with Gothic-arched tympanum bearing the word "Welcome," is in the south bay of the façade. The sanctuary is a T-shaped space centered on the choir loft and pulpit, with pews encircling on three sides.

Hurricane Hazel of 1954 caused the loss of the roof, upper gables, steeple, original clear glass and colored glass windows, and much of the interior fabric. During the 1955 rebuilding a two-story crenellated bell tower replaced the steeple, the side

entrance was expanded, upper brick gables rebuilt, and stained glass windows, dedicated to Oberlin pioneers by their descendants, replaced the original windows. These are: Powell Peebles Sr. 1888-1942; Seaton and Mildred Turner; George and John Flagg; J. S. and W. W. Morgan family; Adolphus and Bessie Manuel; Thomas and Emeline Higgs; Willis, Allen, Lemetta, Claude, Alonza and Maggie Haywood; Wilson S. Lockhart Sr. 1904-1950; The Triangle Club; Jesse Pettiford and his descendants by Dr. and Mrs. W. B. Pettiford; and Alice Lucas 1859-1916. A façade cornerstone is inscribed "Wilson Temple Methodist Church 1873-1952" The date is confusing, as the church was renovated in 1955.

In 1989 a noncontributing one-story brick educational wing was built at the rear, containing a new kitchen, fellowship hall, and offices that nearly doubled the square footage of the building. (Wilson Temple United Methodist Church Raleigh Historic Property Report, 1993; 1971 Wilson Temple UMC typescript history in Wilson Temple Survey File, SHPO)

### **C      1027 Oberlin Rd. Leonidas and Cornelia Haywood Sr. House. 1952**

P. R. White, a white contractor, built this one-story, side-gabled brick Minimal Traditional-style house for Leonidas and Cornelia Haywood in 1952. Leonidas was the principal of Oberlin School. The four-bay by three-bay house sits close to Oberlin Road just north of Wilson Temple United Methodist Church. The intact house features a gabled wood entrance porch, 6/6 wood sash windows, and interior brick chimney. The house has three bedrooms and a den, located in a one-bay wing

extending on the north side, which served as Leonidas's office. The Haywood's son, Leonidas Haywood, has resided here for most of his life. (Leonidas "Sonny" Haywood Jr. interview, October 24, 2016.)

**Oberlin Road, east side:**

**C      720 Oberlin Road. Life Insurance Company of Georgia. Ca. 1965.**

The one-story flat-roofed brick office building of mid-century modern design features a diagonal façade faced with terrazzo blocks, a plate glass door with flanking plate glass sidelights, and a continuous transom window. The façade is sheltered by a projecting stucco porch with a single corner terrazzo-faced post. The south side has a ribbon of eight small original 1/1 metal sash windows set in a stuccoed band. The north side, set extremely close to the Willis Graves House, has no openings. The lot was sold by M. L. Latta to the Life Insurance Company of Georgia in 1965 and the office constructed soon afterward. Current tenant is Sunbelt Security Systems. (<http://services.wakegov.com/realestate/Deeds>.)

**C      802 Oberlin Rd. Willis M. Graves House. Ca. 1890. Raleigh Historic Landmark, 1993; National Register, 2002.**

Willis M. Graves, a brick mason, bought the lot in 1884; he and his wife Eleanor built the imposing two-story frame Queen-Anne style house before 1891. The façade of the side-gabled house features a two-story cutaway bay window with large

pediment on one side, a square turret on the other, and a one-story wraparound porch. The house retains some original plain siding, some original wood sash windows with upper stained glass, fish-scale shingles in the gables, and a front door stained-glass transom with painted name of "Oakcrest." The porch retains its original turned posts, curvilinear brackets, and spindle frieze. Graves was highly respected in the community as a brick mason, church leader, and operator of a store and post office in his house. He died in the early 1920s, leaving the house to his children. Railroad fireman John Graham bought the house in 1938. Spurgeon Fields, long-time chauffeur for Josephus Daniels, editor of the *News and Observer*, and his wife owned the house from 1945 to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Sherry Wyatt, Willis Graves House National Register Nomination, 2002; Raleigh Historic Landmark report, 1993).

**C      806 Oberlin Rd. Oberlin Baptist Church, 1955.**

The church was founded as Mount Moriah Church in the 400 block of Oberlin Road and became Oberlin Baptist Church on its present site in the 1880s. According to the 2002 National Register nomination for the church, Hall's Chapel merged with the Mt. Moriah Church to create the Oberlin Baptist Church in 1912. However, a cornerstone inscribed "O. B. C. 1886" is mounted in the façade of the 2010 Oberlin Baptist Church sanctuary. The cornerstone is a weathered sandstone block that clearly marked the Oberlin Baptist Church construction in 1886. The early history of the Oberlin Baptist Church needs further research because this cornerstone indicates that Oberlin Baptist Church existed in 1886. The founder and first pastor,

Rev. Plummer T. Hall, built a house about this time next door at 814 Oberlin Road. After Rev. Hall's death in 1915, Rev. Fullwilder led the congregation to construct a frame church at 806 Oberlin Road, destroyed by fire in 1955. According to the cornerstone, the church was rebuilt in 1955 under Rev. G. D. Davis. The present one-story front-gabled brick veneer sanctuary is set on a raised basement. The one bay wide, seven bay-deep building has one-to-five Flemish bond variation veneer. The façade features a double front door with plain pilasters and a simple molded pediment, accessed by a brick stoop. There is no steeple. The side elevations have 6/9 colored glass and wood sash windows with round-arch stuccoed tympana. The north side elevation has a double door sheltered by a gabled entrance porch with metal posts and a metal stair railing. The only obvious alteration to the intact building is the wooden handicap ramp wrapping around the south elevation. (*Centennial Anniversary*, published about 1890 by the Centennial Committee of Oberlin Baptist Church, cited in Sherry Wyatt's *Rev. Plummer T. Hall House National Register Nomination*, North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, 2002.)

**NC-age      Oberlin Baptist Church new sanctuary, ca. 2010.**

Located on the north side of the 1955 sanctuary, the new sanctuary is a large one-story front-gabled rectangular building, seven bays wide and ten bays deep. Walls have running bond brick veneer except for the rear wall, which is covered with metal siding. The main façade has a central pedimented entrance porch with boxed posts, plate glass doors and windows, flanked by round-arched windows. To the right of the front entrance is the original sandstone cornerstone of the Oberlin

Baptist Church with the inscription "O.B.C. Aug. 4, 1886." This was apparently removed from the sanctuary that was demolished for the 1955 sanctuary and stored in the basement of the 1955 church until reused in 2010. A similar entrance porch on the east side and a rear entrance with a tall porte-cochere complete the building. (Lillian Alston interview, Nov. 22, 2016).

**C      814 Oberlin Rd. Plummer T. Hall House, 1880-1893 Raleigh Historic Landmark, 1993, National Register, 2002**

Plummer T. Hall (1849-1915) was born a slave to the Hester family of Raleigh. He was the first pastor of Hall's Chapel established in the 1200 block of Oberlin Road in 1880. The one-story Queen-Anne style house cannot be dated exactly, but was built between 1880, when Hall resided on Blount Street in Raleigh, and 1901, when the Halls are listed in Oberlin in the *Raleigh City Directory*. The intact house is a single-pile, side-gable Queen Anne-style house with plain siding, a central front cross-gable, 6/6 and 4/4 wood sash windows, and an original paneled front door with upper arched glass panels. The original front porch has turned posts with curvilinear brackets and a corner turreted gazebo. Rev. Hall added a front-gabled pastor's office about 1900 to the front corner, with a door opening to the porch and a bay window with 4/4 sashes. The front and rear gable ends have a quatrefoil louvered vent. The rear wing replaced deteriorated earlier additions about 1996 during a rehabilitation financed by the city of Raleigh's Historic District Commission. Hall's widow, Della, resided in the house until her death in the 1930s. She operated a grocery at 623 Oberlin Road in the 1920s. Her son Frank and his wife Susie lived



there throughout their lives. Frank worked for the Department of Agriculture for forty-five years, and died about 1959. His wife Susie B. Hall lived there until the 1970s. (Rev. Plummer T. Hall House Raleigh Historic Landmark Report, 1993; Sherry Wyatt, Rev. Plummer T. Hall House National Register Nomination, 2002)

**VL 818 Oberlin Road**

**VL 910 Oberlin Road**

**C 1002 Oberlin Rd. John and Mary Turner House. Ca. 1889, ca. 1910.**

**Raleigh Historic Landmark, 1996; National Register, 2002.**

According to family tradition, John T. and his wife Mary Turner built a one-story house on the one-acre lot they purchased here in 1889. It is believed to be the one-story rear section between the front two-story I-House and the rear wing. About 1910 they built the imposing front addition, whose simple transitional Victorian and Classical Revival design survives intact. The front block is three bays wide and one bay deep, with two interior brick chimneys. Original features include plain wood siding, 2/2 wood sash windows, a front double door with arched glass in the upper section, a transom and sidelights, and a paneled and bracketed bay window on the south side. A one-story porch with classical columns extends across the façade and down the north side to a door in the rear wing. Above the entrance bay is a pedimented balcony with the same columns and a turned railing that sits atop a shingled wall. In the pediment is a lunette louvered vent; the gable ends have round

wood louvered vents. The interior of the two-story section contains a central stair hall, flanking parlors on the first floor and two bedrooms on the upper floor.

Original finishes include an ornate classical staircase, beadboard wainscots, and two Neoclassical mantels with mirrored overmantels in the north parlor and adjacent dining room and a simpler mantel with mirrored overmantel in the south parlor.

John Turner (ca. 1860-1922) married his wife Mary in Wake County in 1888. Among his myriad entrepreneurial pursuits was operating a grocery store in his side yard and operating a shoe store on Hargett Street from about 1912 to his death. His son John Jerome inherited the house and took over the shoe company until its failure in 1932. John J. later worked as an agent for the N. C. Mutual Life Insurance Company, as a janitor at the State Department of Agriculture, and as an orderly at Rex Hospital. He died in 1971. His wife Tulia remained at the house with her son John V. Turner until her death in 2001. John V., a business professor at N. C. Central University in Durham, lived at the house until his death in 2007. The house is now owned by Turner family heirs. (Raleigh Historic Landmark report, 1993; Wyatt, John and Mary Turner House National Register Nomination, 2002; Cheryl Turner Williams interview, Oct 23, 2016).

**NC-age      1012 Oberlin Rd. Interact. Ca. 1974.**

The former YWCA building is a large one, two, and three-story modern building that includes a large gymnasium, a swimming pool, and residential quarters on the upper floors. It features walls, large windows, and a rounded tower on the façade. The “Y”

closed in the early 2000s and was sold and leased to Interact of Wake County Family Safety and Empowerment Center, which has operated here to the present. Other agencies housed in the building include Easter Seals, Legal Aid of North Carolina, and the Raleigh Police Department. The site contained Oberlin Public School until its demolition about 1970. The only remaining access to Oberlin Cemetery, located behind this building, is through its paved driveway and rear parking lot.

**C-site            1014 Oberlin Rd. Oberlin Cemetery. 1873. Raleigh Historic Landmark, 2012**

In 1873 Nicholas Pettiford sold one acre to the trustees of Oberlin Cemetery for use as a cemetery, to be sold in lots for burials. About 1900 John T. Turner donated about a half-acre on the east side as a cemetery annex. Known as Pine View Cemetery, the cemetery annex plat is dated 1924. The additional 1 ½ acres of the current 2.93-acre cemetery were added at an unknown time. Although there are believed to be about 600 individuals buried here, only some 145 scattered monuments of stone and concrete (with a few of other materials) have survived. The relatively flat terrain is shaded by oak, cedar, and magnolia trees. Monuments in the original section have death dates from 1876 to 1971; those in the Pine View annex have death dates from 1911 to 2007. Most of the monuments, whether of marble or concrete, are of professional manufacture by skilled stonecutters and artisans. One undated arched wooden headboard survives; it is likely late 1800s or early 1900s. Monuments for Oberlin's early settlers include Margaret Andrews (died 1889; wife of Andrew Andrews); Rev. Plummer T. Hall (died 1915); Grandison Turner (died

1928); Haynes Clarke (died 1919; Dr. George W. Williams (died 1912); Jessie L. Pettiford (died 1921); and Charles H. Hunter (died 1956). The cemetery was designated a Raleigh Historic Landmark in 1912 (Oberlin Cemetery Raleigh Historic Landmark designation report, M. Ruth Little, Longleaf Historic Resources, 2012).

**NC-age      1018 Oberlin Rd. Greenlee Dental Center. ca. 2000**

The one-story brick commercial building, three bays wide and eight bays deep, has a flat roof and a façade with a double metal and glass door and flanking fixed pane windows. On the north side is a paved parking lot. The north elevation has an additional entrance in one of the rear bays. Current tenants are Greenlee Dental Center, Village Eyecare, and Barbershop. (Kelly Greenlee interview, November 1, 2016).

**Parker Street, west side**

**C-site      1001 Parker St. Latta House and Latta University Site. Raleigh Historic Landmark, 1993**

The 1.97-acre wooded site, bounded by Parker Street on the east and Tower Street on the west, is owned by the City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department and operated as a park. In 2007, the early 1900s residence of Rev. M. L. Latta (1853-ca. 1940) was destroyed by fire. The site is where Rev. Latta built a “university” that opened ca. 1892 and officially closed ca. 1922, when Latta sold the property to the Parker-Hunter Realty Company. The two-story frame vernacular Queen Anne-style dwelling had a wraparound porch. It was deteriorated and unoccupied when it

burned. Latta built a number of frame buildings for students, who learned farming and skills such as carpentry, brick laying, and house work. In the mid-1890s there were 92 students. By 1903 Latta owned about 300 acres in this area. Latta owned the house lot until 1931. An archaeological investigation performed in 2009 by Environmental Services, Inc. determined that this lot held the Manual Training Department. (Scott Seibel and Terri Russ, Latta House and Latta University Site report, Environmental Services Inc., 2009)

### **Roberts Street, north side**

#### **C      2208 Roberts St. Mary Ella Rollins House. Ca. 1957.**

The small side-gabled brick Ranch, built about 1957, is basically intact, with original 2/2 horizontal wood sash windows, a central entrance with a gabled two-bay entrance porch with replacement wood posts, and an interior brick chimney. The side gables have asbestos shakes. Mary Ella Rollins had the house constructed when she moved back to her native Raleigh after living in New York. Her heirs, the Turner family descended from Grandison Turner, currently own the house. (Tony Turner interview, Dec. 7, 2016; Wake County Real Estate information, accessed 11-17-16)

### **Roberts Street, south side**

#### **C      2207 Roberts St. Johnny Thomas House. early 1900s.**

Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Thomas, an African American couple, owned this house on its original site on nearby St. Mary's Street. Seaton Turner, an Oberlin Village mail carrier, purchased it and moved it here in the mid-1900s for use as a rental. Seaton's

son Moses Turner and his wife Mary lived here for some time. Jesse Helms and his wife Dot purchased the house as a rental in 1990 from the Turner family. The somewhat intact one-story frame tri-gable-type house has a front cross-gable with a louvered vent, plain siding with corner boards, boxed, molded eaves with wide eave returns, and original 4/4 wood sash windows in the façade. The nearly full front porch has a hipped roof and replacement wood posts. The rear wing has an enclosed porch. (Wake County Real Estate information, accessed 11-17-16; Mable Patterson interview, Nov. 18, 2016)

**C      2211 Roberts St. James Smith Jr. House. Ca. 1925.**

The one-story, side-gabled, frame tri-gable-type house has plain siding, 6/6 wood sash windows, a front cross-gable, and a full hipped-porch with replacement posts. To the rear are two gabled wings, one with an interior brick chimney. The 1945-6 Raleigh City Directory shows James L. Smith Jr. and his wife India B. as the owner-occupants of 2213 Roberts, which appears to have been this house. James was an employee at the Royal Theater. In the 1990s James's son Louis A. Smith added a gabled entrance porch in front of the cross-gable, with a cloverleaf louvered wood vent that may have originally been in the cross-gable. He also added a small rear addition. (Ann Sides e-mail correspondence, Nov. 6, 2016).

**Tower Street, east side**

**NC-age        700 Tower Street. House. ca. 2000.**

The two-story frame house was built about 2000 on the northwest corner of Bedford and Tower streets. The Craftsman-Revival design features two front-gabled blocks separated by a recessed entrance, a two-story garage block separated by a breezeway, and Craftsman-style wood eave brackets. Two sets of French doors open to a wraparound Craftsman-style porch.

**Van Dyke Ave., north side**

**C        2206 Van Dyke Ave. Leslie and Addie Wright House. 1920s.**

Although the one-story side-gabled bungalow was brick veneered some years ago, it retains its original front-gable dormer window and a full shed porch with brick piers and boxed wood posts. The house has louvered wood vents in the dormer, replacement wood sash windows, and a replacement concrete porch floor. To the rear is a frame rental apartment addition. In 1930 Leslie Wright, an auto mechanic, and his wife Addie resided here. Mrs. Wright remained in the house until well into the mid-twentieth century. (Raleigh City Directories 1930s and 1940s; Joe Holt Jr. interview 11-3-16)

**NC-age        2208 Van Dyke Ave. House. Ca. 2011.**

A sizeable 2 ½-story frame infill house with a transomed entrance, an entrance porch, and stone veneer accent wall on the lower façade.

**NC-alt.        2210 Van Dyke Ave. Mary Hunter House. 1920s.**

Mary Hunter occupied this house in the 1930s. By the 1940s Charles W. Hunter, an employee of Staudt's Bakery, and his wife Gladys were the owner-occupants. The one-story side-gabled frame bungalow retains its original form, its front-gable dormer window, two interior brick chimneys, and four-pane entrance transom. The rest of the exterior fabric has been recently replaced with vinyl siding and windows, and the front porch rebuilt with a concrete floor and replacement posts.

**NC        Shed.** c. 2000. Frame shed that cannot be viewed due to a fence.

**NC-age        2212 Van Dyke Ave. House. 2016**

The two-story frame infill house features a shallow wraparound porch and a pair of front cross-gables.

**NC-age        2214 Van Dyke Ave. House. 2016**

The frame two-story infill house features an accent wall of stone, a front-cross-gable, a small entrance porch, and a screen porch in a one-story rear wing.

**NC-age        Garage.** 1-story front-gable frame garage built in 2016.

**C        2300-2306 Van Dyke Ave. Four-Plex. Ca. 1955.**

The one-story brick four-plex with hipped roof at the southwest corner of Parker and Van Dyke streets was built for S. R. Collins as rental property. His heirs sold it in 2012 to new owners who did a sensitive rehab that preserved the simple design and finishes. The original entrances have glazed and paneled wood doors. Windows



have 6/6 vinyl sash replacements of the original 6/6 wood sashes. Each entrance is accessed by a brick and concrete stoop with an original metal railing. Two apartments have entrances on the front, the other two on the rear. Each has two bedrooms and one bath. (Brad Harvey interview, 2013)

### **Van Dyke Ave, south side**

#### **C      2211 Van Dyke Ave. House. Ca. 1960.**

The narrow one-story front-gabled frame house, three bays wide and three bays deep, has an interior concrete-block chimney flue, metal sliding glass windows, and some 1/1 wood sash windows. The front porch has a concrete floor, decorative metal posts and railing, and a metal awning roof. The house could not be located in 1960s city directories, perhaps due to having been renumbered.

**NC-age      Shed.** Small metal prefab shed.

#### **C      2303 Van Dyke Ave. James V. Morgan House. Ca. 1960.**

The small side-gabled Ranch house has a façade with a brick wainscot and upper board-and-batten siding. On one side of the central entrance is a wood picture window with flanking 1/1 wood sash windows, on the other side are two sash windows. A two-bay shed entrance porch has a concrete floor and replacement wood posts. Windows are primarily original 2/2 horizontal wood sash. A low two-story addition to the rear, added in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, has vinyl siding and a wood balcony across the upper level. The house was not listed in the 1959

directory; James V. Morgan was the resident in the 1961 Raleigh City Directory. The current owner is Ophelia Lanier. (Interview with daughter of Ophelia Lanier, Oct. 29, 2016).

**NC-age**      **Shed.** 1970s. Plywood front-gabled shed with attached open carport.

**NC-alt.**      **2307 Van Dyke Ave. Julia L. Brown House. Ca. 1930s**

The small front-gabled one-story frame house of shotgun form is not listed in the Raleigh City Directories until the late 1950s, when Mrs. Julia L. Brown was the owner-occupant. The two-bay-wide house has a central stuccoed chimney and a full front shed porch. All windows are 2/2 horizontal wood sash. Alterations include vinyl siding, a porch with a tile floor, decorative metal posts, and a metal awning, a flat-roof addition on the east side, and a lower rear addition.

**NC-age**      **Shed.** Small prefab metal shed.

**C**      **2309 Van Dyke Ave. House. Ca. 1920s.**

The intact one-story pyramidal cottage has wood shake walls, 3/1 Craftsman-style wood sash windows, exposed rafter tails, and a shallow recessed porch. The porch has replacement wood posts. There is an interior stuccoed chimney. A hipped dormer window in the façade has exposed rafter tails and a pair of two-pane fixed wood windows. The house could not be located in city directories prior to 1950—it may have been moved to this site.

## NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Summary

The Oberlin Village Historic Overlay District represents the longest surviving and most intact Reconstruction-Era freedman's colony in Wake County as well as in North Carolina. The three major freedman's colonies in the state: James City, Roanoke Island, and Freedom Hill/Princeville, which formed during and just after the Civil War, have lost their historic physical character. James City and Princeville exist as black communities but neither has a recognizable historic district, while the above-ground remains of the Roanoke Island colony are gone. Of the five that developed in and around Raleigh during Reconstruction: Nazareth, Lincolnville, Brooklyn, Method, and Oberlin, only Oberlin and Method have survived. Oberlin is the most physically intact.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the Oberlin Village Historic Overlay District possesses strong significance to the city of Raleigh and to the state of North Carolina in the areas of African American history and of nineteenth and twentieth-century architecture.

The district boundaries define the village center remaining from its peak of development in the early 1960s: most of both sides of Oberlin Road from 802 to the 1000 block (approximately four blocks), and a portion of the side streets of Bedford Avenue, Roberts Street, Van Dyke Avenue, and Parker Street. Seven significant designated Raleigh Historic Landmarks anchor the district: Willis Graves House, 802 Oberlin Road (ca. 1890); Wilson Temple United Methodist Church, 1023 Oberlin Road (1910-1911);

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<sup>2</sup> Bishir and Southern, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Eastern North Carolina*, 319. Princeville has an 1890s Mount Zion Primitive Baptist Church and the late 1930s Princeville School, which became the town hall in later 20<sup>th</sup> century; Wyatt, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Oberlin, Wake County, North Carolina, 1865-1952," E4; The community of Warnersville outside Greensboro was destroyed by urban renewal, leaving only the cemetery in place. See Brown, *Greensboro An Architectural Record*, 72.

James S. Morgan House, 1015 Oberlin Road (ca. 1900); Plummer T. Hall House, 1014 Oberlin Road (ca. 1890); John and Mary Turner House, 1002 Oberlin Road (ca. 1910); Oberlin Cemetery, 1014 Oberlin Road (1873-1970); and Latta House and University Site, 1001 Parker Street (ca. 1892-ca. 1922). The Turner House, Hall House, and Graves House were listed on the National Register in 2002. Twenty-eight other historic buildings, evaluated for the first time in this district report, contribute to the district's significance and are included in the boundary. The district's period of historic significance begins with the oldest property, Oberlin Cemetery, established in 1873, and ends in 1970 with the closure and demolition of Oberlin Graded School and the beginning of the village's loss of identity.

### **Reconstruction-era Development of Oberlin Village 1866-1880s**

Oberlin Village evolved during the Reconstruction era of 1866-1872, one of the most turbulent periods of North Carolina history. Within a few months of the end of the Civil War in 1865, former slaves in the South assembled in conventions to proclaim their rights. Some 120 black delegates to the Freedmen's Convention of North Carolina met in the present St. Paul AME Church in Raleigh in October 1865. In 1866 the federal government abolished Southern state constitutions and governed the states under military force, obliging each state to write a new constitution that gave full citizenship to freed slaves. In 1867, the Military Reconstruction Act, which gave blacks the right to vote, and the Fourteenth Amendment, which guaranteed citizenship for blacks, enabled former

slaves to compete for political power with their former masters only two years after the abolition of slavery.<sup>3</sup>

Republicans swept into power in North Carolina after the constitutional convention in 1868, electing William W. Holden as governor and gaining a majority in the legislature, including twenty black men, among them James H. Harris (1832-1891), a prominent black leader in North Carolina from the end of the war to his death in 1891. Sheriff Timothy Lee, a white Union soldier and a Republican from Brooklyn who settled in Raleigh after the war, worked closely with Harris. Although Holden was impeached by the Democrats in 1870 and removed from office in 1871, his allies Harris, Lee, and others established the freedmen's village of Oberlin that endured, in spite of Jim Crow segregation from ca. 1900-ca. 1965, as a community of dignity and self-respect for hundreds of African American families.

The immigration of freed slaves to North Carolina's towns after the end of the Civil War in 1865 led to the creation of freedmen's villages, all-black settlements along town outskirts, a phenomenon of the late 1860s and 1870s. Five such villages developed around Raleigh: Nazareth, Lincolnton, Brooklyn, Method, and Oberlin, but the first three have been obliterated. An alliance of white and black Republicans in Raleigh from the end of the war to the early 1870s succeeded in establishing Oberlin Village, an independent all black community that nurtured African Americans to own land, gain an

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<sup>3</sup>W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Reconstruction and the Formerly Enslaved." [www.nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1865-1917/essays/reconstruction.htm](http://www.nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1865-1917/essays/reconstruction.htm), accessed Dec. 1, 2016; "Reconstruction Era," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstruction\\_Era](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstruction_Era), accessed April 19, 2017.

education, and achieve self-determination and economic success for over a century. Republican power ended when the Democrats regained control of the legislature in 1876.

The village's existence depended upon the willingness of white landowners to subdivide their land along Oberlin Road and sell lots to newly-freed African Americans, and to the availability of loans to them to purchase lots and erect dwellings. The village was not laid out as a planned entity by a single developer but by a number of white entrepreneurs who subdivided their land along Oberlin Road during its first decade, from 1866 to 1876. Developers, including Lewis W. Peck, Timothy F. Lee, and the Raleigh Cooperative Land and Building Company, subdivided at least four separate rural tracts of land: the Peck Farm, William Boylan Farm, a tract at the corner of present-day Hillsborough and Oberlin roads, and the Whitaker Farm (San Domingo). Oberlin's purchasers were aided by several lending corporations, including the National Freedmen's Saving and Trust Company, the North Carolina Land Company, the Wake County Cooperative Business Company, and the Raleigh Cooperative Land and Building Association.<sup>4</sup>

White merchant and entrepreneur Lewis W. Peck is the earliest known landowner to sell lots to African Americans. His land consisted of a large tract on each side of Oberlin Road, each labeled "Peck's Field," in a "Survey of All the approaches to the City of Raleigh" by H. T. Guinn, Oct. 26, 1863."<sup>5</sup> From January 26, 1867 to 1883 he sold lots to at least a dozen people along Oberlin Road. Peck's earliest known sales are to William

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<sup>4</sup> Murray, *Wake Capital County*, I, 643.

<sup>5</sup> H. T. Guinn Survey, National Archives, copy in N.C. State Archives.

Armstead, Robert Wyche, and Talitha Norwood in 1866; to Isham Ferrell, Alfred Patterson, Thomas Williams, Seth Nowell, Norfleet Jeffries, Monroe Smith, and Asa Hunt in 1867; and to Henry Jones in 1868. Peck died about 1889.<sup>6</sup> Four men are known to have been African Americans; the race of the others is unknown.

Sheriff Timothy F. Lee subdivided the next known development, the northwest corner of Hillsborough Street and Oberlin Road Lee, a Union soldier from Brooklyn who moved to Raleigh after the war and lived on a farm on the south side of Hillsborough Street at the junction of Oberlin Road, served as sheriff of Wake County from 1868 to 1874.<sup>7</sup> Lee purchased about 34 acres of land at a public sale of the William Boylan land, north of the Peck land along Oberlin Road, for \$1,626 in June 1869 (Wake County DB 30, 597). Sheriff Lee and wife sold a lot to John James in November 1872 for \$50 that adjoined W. H. Morgan's corner (Wake County DB 34, 786). Five acres of the Boylan land had been bought by W. H. Morgan, who apparently also sold lots to African Americans, since an early name for the community was "Morgantown."<sup>8</sup> In July 1869 Lee acquired a seven-acre tract across from his homestead at the northwest corner of Chapel Hill (now Hillsborough) and Hillsborough (now Oberlin) roads (Wake DB 27, 503). In August 1869 Fendol Bevers surveyed and divided a portion of it into seven numbered lots (Wake County DB 35, 425). On December 12, 1871 James Shepherd purchased lot no. 6 for \$100 (Wake County DB 33, 271). On November 4, 1872 Betsy Hinton paid \$126 for Lot 13 in the survey plat by Bevers dated Aug. 6, 1869 (Wake County DB 34, 746). This may also be another section of the same tract.

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<sup>6</sup> Wake County Deeds; Wake County Grantor Index, Lewis W. Peck.

<sup>7</sup> Murray, I, 630, 643, Appendix B.

<sup>8</sup> Wake County Deed Book 30, 597. Briggs, "Oberlin Village Emerged During Reconstruction."

The Raleigh Cooperative Land and Building Association (RCLBA), a lending corporation incorporated in 1869 by James H. Harris and J. Brinton Smith in the present St. Paul AME Church in Raleigh, helped to develop Oberlin's house sites. Harris served as its president, Smith as its treasurer. Harris, one of the leading black politicians in Wake County, was born in Granville County as a slave, earned his freedom, and became an upholsterer. He traveled to Ohio where he is said to have studied at Oberlin College, and then moved about the U.S. and Canada assisting slaves escaping the South. During the war he commissioned the 28<sup>th</sup> Regiment of U.S. Colored Troops in Indiana. Upon his return to Raleigh, he was a delegate to the 1865 "Colored Men's Convention," worked for the Freedmen's Bureau as a director of the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company, and helped organize the Union League, an association of black men allied with the Republican party.<sup>9</sup> Smith, a white school teacher from the North and an officer of the Freedman's Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church, served as the first principal of the school that became St. Augustine's College, which opened in 1868 in Raleigh.<sup>10</sup>

Such lending associations existed in other American cities, but the Raleigh Cooperative Land and Building Association is said to have been the first mortgage cooperative in North Carolina. It operated for ten years as both a land developer and

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<sup>9</sup> Crow, Escott, and Hatley, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*, 85; "James Harris Obituary," *Raleigh Gazette*, June 6, 1891; Logan, *The Negro in North Carolina 1876-1894*, 29, 110. Harris served as a Raleigh alderman, directed the Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind for four years, published the *North Carolina Republican* newspaper in the early 1880s, and the *Raleigh Gazette* in the mid-1890s.

<sup>10</sup>History of St. Augustine's, [www.st-aug.edu/history.html](http://www.st-aug.edu/history.html) accessed Nov. 23, 2016; Willis Briggs, "Oberlin Village Emerged During Reconstruction."



mortgage bank and enabled many Oberlin people to construct homes.<sup>11</sup> The RCLBA purchased some of the William Boylan estate. In June 1869 the association sold lots and houses or provided building loans to at least three African Americans in the Oberlin community. The deeds are for lots adjacent to each other located along the “old road” and the “new road,” whether this is a portion of the Boylan land or some other property is not clear from the deeds. On June 14, 1869 John Dickerson purchased a house on a three-acre lot for \$199 located on the new road adjacent to the property of Wilson Copeland, Simon Barker, and a Mr. Hamilton. In order to make this purchase, he also bought two shares of association stock and contracted to pay 6% interest per year in equal monthly installments on the loan and to retain homeowner’s insurance on the property. The association would foreclose on Dickerson if he failed to pay his interest for six months. President J. H. Harris and treasurer J. Brinton Smith signed the deed, while John Dickerson signed with his mark (Wake County DB 27, 459). Mary, wife of John Dickerson, born in 1826 and died in 1884, is buried beneath a well-finished arched marble headstone in Oberlin Cemetery. On June 14, 1869 the RCLBA sold an approximately three-acre lot to Wilson Copeland for the same price and same terms as Dickerson (DB 27, 462). On June 12, 1869 Alfred Williams and his wife Sarah mortgaged their approximately three-acre lot to the RCLBA for \$157, likely to construct a house (DB27, 461).

About 1870 an unknown developer platted the planned town of “San Domingo,” which was subdivided on 100 acres of land sold by heirs of Wilson Whitaker. The

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<sup>11</sup> Murray, *Wake Capital County*, I, 643; *Daily Standard*, Raleigh, March 8, 1869; “Cooperative Movement,” *The Weekly Standard*, Mar. 24, 1869; “Raleigh Co-operative Land and Building Association,” *The Raleigh News*, Feb. 11, 1873.

subdivision, a short distance north of “Peck’s Place,” consisted of four new streets: Grant Avenue, presumably named for President Grant; Wade Avenue for Benjamin Wade, an early Ohio abolitionist; Baez Street for the then president of Santo Domingo (now Dominican Republic), the first black republic in the new world; and Butler Street (later Chester Road).<sup>12</sup> The names reflect the subdivision’s intended African American buyers. San Domingo was a thriving section of Oberlin Village until its redevelopment as a white subdivision in the early to mid-twentieth century. This area, north of Wade Avenue, has lost its historic African American character and is not included in the historic district.

Although many lots were sold in the late 1860s, the village grew slowly in the beginning. The 1870 census for Raleigh Township, which included Oberlin, listed only some twenty black families. Fourteen of these lived close together, including carpenter Thomas Norwood, well digger Charles Hunter; laborers Nicholas Alford, Badger Harrison, Daniel Green, Simon Raynor, and Bryant Perry, and the female households of Nancy Iredell, who did house work, and Carolina Williams, who did washing. These may be Oberlin’s earliest residents. Some of the pioneers who bought their lots in the late 1860s, including drayman Seth Nowell, carpenter John Flagg, Norfleet Jeffries, brickmason James Morgan, and minister Wilson Morgan still lived in the traditionally African American area of East Ward in Raleigh in 1870, perhaps saving money for house construction.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Murray, *Wake: Capital County of North Carolina*, I, 644. See Deed Book 32, 577 and plat of San Domingo (Deed Book 32, 584) and resurvey by C. L. Mann, 1913 (Wake County Plat Book 1911, 109).

<sup>13</sup> 1870 U. S. Census, population schedule, Wake County, Raleigh Township and Raleigh East Ward.

By 1872, a sufficient number of residents lived in Oberlin that Raleigh's *Daily News* noted that the new residential area, which the newspaper called "Morganton," constituted "our principal suburban village, distant about two and a half miles from the city." The reporter remarked that its population was "composed almost exclusively of colored families who are represented as very industrious and thriving, and we learn has increased so rapidly within the past few months that it will soon require a municipal corporation of its own."<sup>14</sup>

White newspapers referred to the colony by neutral names such as "Peck's Place," "Morganton," and "Save-Rent," and by derogatory references, leading its citizens to assert their right to name their own community. Raleigh's *Daily News* printed a letter on March 13, 1872 from "Many Citizens:"

Dear Sir:

You will please do us the kindness to correct the many errors you have unknowingly made in the name of our flourishing little village. It is neither Morganton, San Domingo, or "Save Rent" but Oberlin. With a due compliance, you will greatly oblige etc.<sup>15</sup>

The paper's response, the same day:

At the request of "Many Citizens" we publish the following communication handed us by one of the same yesterday. In answer to which we will say, call it what you please. We are sorry we ever called it anything but should necessity hereafter require it, we shall call it Morgantown, San Domingo-Save Rent-Oberlin.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Murray, *Wake: Capital County*, I, 644.

<sup>15</sup> *Daily News*, Raleigh, March 12, 1872.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Residents are believed to have chosen the name “Oberlin” for the connections of several Raleigh African Americans, in particular, that of James Harris, to Ohio’s Oberlin College, associated with freedom and educational opportunities for Negroes.<sup>17</sup> For several years the press resisted the new name. For example in August 1872 the *Raleigh News* reported that “About 80 negroes from Oberlin—San Domingo—Save-Rent—Morganton—marched into the city yesterday with banners flying and drums beating” in order to deposit their ballots for U.S. Grant for president.<sup>18</sup> Throughout the 1870s, the fiery Democratic newspaper, *The Raleigh Sentinel*, referred to Oberlin as “a romantic and notorious village of Oberlin,” “that classic village,” and “an African colony.”<sup>19</sup>

During the 1870s Oberlin’s pioneers established essential institutions for an independent community: two churches, a cemetery, and a school along the 800-1000 blocks of Oberlin Road between present-day Roberts Street and Wade Avenue. They also created new social and fraternal service-oriented organizations, many affiliated with their churches. The actual date when Oberlin residents organized the Methodist Episcopal Church is unknown; they built their first sanctuary about 1873. In 1874, Rev. Wilson W. Morgan, a prominent Republican who had served as a Wake County representative in the General Assembly from 1870 to 1872, donated a parcel to church trustees Mingo G. Croom, N. S. Farrer, L. B. Hinton, S. B. Cravan, and Henry Forter for the use of the church (Wake County DB 37, 227). On July 16, 1876 the Oberlin Methodist Episcopal Sunday School held a celebration at the new fairgrounds at the end of present-day

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<sup>17</sup> *Wake: Capital County of North Carolina*, Vol. 1, 644-645.

<sup>18</sup> “The Oberlin Procession,” *The Raleigh News*, Aug. 2, 1872.

<sup>19</sup> “Stolen Goods,” *Sentinel*, Raleigh, Dec. 21, 1872; “Fire,” *Weekly Sentinel*, Raleigh, Nov. 9, 1875; *Sentinel*, Raleigh, July 21, 1876.

Stafford Street.<sup>20</sup> The church was later renamed Wilson Temple Methodist Church to honor Rev. Morgan.

Oberlin Baptist Church, 814 Oberlin Road, was founded as Mount Moriah Church in the 400 block of Oberlin Road and became Oberlin Baptist Church on its present site in 1880. The founder and first pastor, Rev. Plummer T. Hall, built a house at 814 Oberlin Road around 1890 that served as the parsonage.<sup>21</sup>

In 1873, Nicholas Pettiford sold a one-acre tract to the people of Oberlin to be used as a cemetery. It was to be sold in lots for burials; failure to use it for such purpose would cause it to revert to the trustees: John Manuel, Coffee Williams, Mingo G. Croom, Seth Nowell, and Nelson Turner. Others mentioned in the deed were Lemuel Hinton, Isham Ferrell, R. L. Pettiford, and James D. Morgan. The cemetery was expanded by about one acre prior to 1900, and expanded along its south border by about a half-acre about 1900 by a donation by John Turner that was named Pine View Cemetery.<sup>22</sup> Oberlin Cemetery's earliest gravestones are uninscribed fieldstones, and one uninscribed wooden headboard has survived. The earliest burial recorded on a monument is that of child Julia Andrews (1874-1876) listed with other infants on the obelisk of her mother Margaret Andrews, who died in 1889. A persistent tradition that the cemetery was used prior to the Civil War as a slave graveyard has never been proven.

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<sup>20</sup> "Grand Centennial Celebration", *The Raleigh Sentinel*, Aug. 4, 1876.

<sup>21</sup> Rev. Plummer T. Hall House, Raleigh Historic Landmark, Raleigh Historic Development Commission website. Rev. Plummer T. Hall House National Register Nomination, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Wake County Deed Book 40, 445; Pine View Cemetery Survey Plat, 1924, Larry Tucker, surveyor. Wake County Book of Maps 1924-00081.

Newspapers from the 1860s and 1870s record the prominent community roles played by a number of Oberlin's pioneer residents, including Norfleet Jeffries, Norfleet Dunston, R. L. Pettiford, J. D. Morgan, and John Flagg, both before and after they moved to Oberlin Village. Norfleet Jeffries, a pressman of the *Daily Standard* newspaper, bought a lot on Oberlin Road in 1867 from Lewis Peck. In 1870 he still lived in East Raleigh but had moved to Oberlin Road by 1880. On March 6, 1867, the newly-organized Colored People's Association, meeting at Flagg's Hall, elected him chairman. In 1872 Jeffries served as president of the ninth Emancipation Celebration association, when some 3,000 blacks and whites processed from the A.M.E. Church on West Street to Metropolitan Hall (Raleigh's city hall), to celebrate.<sup>23</sup> Norfleet Dunston, an Oberlin man and a justice of the peace, served on the planning committee for the eighth celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 2, 1871.<sup>24</sup> This may be the same Norfleet Dunston, born in 1836, who was a farmer in Oberlin in the 1880 and 1900 censuses. J. D. Morgan and R. L. Pettiford (whose names appear on the 1873 deed creating Oberlin Cemetery) were elected secretary and treasurer of a Grant and Wilson Club organized in Oberlin village in 1872.<sup>25</sup> A "Hayes and Settle Club" organized in Oberlin in July 1876 selected John Flagg as its president. Activities at its September meeting included an address by Tim Lee and music by the Raleigh Colored brass band.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Daily Standard*, Oct. 18, 1870; "Meeting of the Colored People of the City of Raleigh," *The Daily Standard*, Raleigh, Mar. 12, 1867; "Emancipation Celebration," *Tri-Weekly Era*, Raleigh, Jan. 11, 1872.

<sup>24</sup> "Barn Burning," *Weekly Standard*, Raleigh, July 20, 1870; "Anniversary Celebration," *The Daily Standard*, Raleigh, Dec. 19, 1870.

<sup>25</sup> "Organizing," *Tri-Weekly Era*, Raleigh, Sept. 28, 1872.

<sup>26</sup> *The Raleigh Sentinel*, July 21, 1876; *Raleigh Sentinel*, Sept. 3, 1876.

The growth of Oberlin elicited this favorable mention in a forward section on suburban development in the 1880 *Raleigh City Directory*:

Quite a town, composed almost entirely of colored people, has grown up a mile northwest of the city. The length is more than a mile and it has some 750 inhabitants. It has been given the name Oberlin. The houses...are almost entirely of wood, but little stone or brick being used in the construction of dwellings. An ample space is given each dwelling, and this causes the city to cover much ground...<sup>27</sup>

The 1880 census lists approximately 161 black households clustered in the village. The occupations of the heads of households reveal that Oberlin was a community of skilled craftsmen, many of whom worked in downtown Raleigh. Tax records indicate that more Oberlin residents owned their land in 1880 than in any other section of Raleigh Township—ninety African American landowners each owned from \$200-\$500 worth of property.<sup>28</sup>

Oberlin's reputation as an industrious colony derived from its high number of artisans and other tradesmen. While most of the men enumerated in the 1880 census worked as farm laborers, the second largest occupation was brick mason, with house carpenter ranking third and farmer ranking fourth. Brick and stone masons included Willis Graves, James S. Morgan, John Manuel, William Burnett, and James Rex. Carpenters and other building artisans included John Flagg, Spencer Williams, Henry Jasper, Seth Christmas, Oliver Brown, and Isiah Perry; ministers included W. W. Morgan, Plummer T. Hall, and John Jeffries; and farmers included Grandison Turner, Henry Andrews, and Andrew Andrews. Seth Nowell and Bryant Haywood worked as

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<sup>27</sup> 1880 *Raleigh City Directory*. Quoted in Mattson, "The Evolution of Raleigh's African-American Neighborhoods," 10.

<sup>28</sup> Mattson, "The Evolution of Raleigh's African-American Neighborhoods," 10.

draymen (teamsters), Bob Headen was a miller, Willis Haywood, a blacksmith, R. L. Pettiford, a tinner, John Dunston, a machinist, Charles Manly, a shoemaker, and John Person, a butcher. Daniel Green was employed as a cemetery sexton (likely for the Oberlin Cemetery). Most of the women worked as well, primarily as laundresses, although other occupations were seamstresses, cooks, servants, nurses, and farm laborers. Farmer Andrew Andrews was famous for the Confederate pension he drew because he helped build the breastworks around Raleigh in March 1865.<sup>29</sup> Some fifteen of the households in the 1880 Raleigh Township census were white, primarily farm families, along with Gaston Stafford, the white state fairgrounds keeper, and the white staff and teachers at St. Mary's School for Girls on Hillsborough Street.<sup>30</sup>

Residents of Oberlin held education as one of their highest values, and nurtured a village school in the Oberlin Methodist Episcopal Church (now Wilson Temple) beginning about 1873. When the State Colored Education Convention met in Raleigh in 1877, it elected Oberlin promoter James H. Harris as its president.<sup>31</sup> By 1882, the village school operated in a separate one-room building.<sup>32</sup> In 1883, R. L. Pettiford and his wife Sarah sold a one-acre lot on Oberlin Road in front of the cemetery for a school, and the original one-room school was enlarged to three rooms, making it the centerpiece of the community. In 1884, *The News and Observer* of Raleigh noted that "The finest and most

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<sup>29</sup> Briggs, "Oberlin Village Emerged During Reconstruction."

<sup>30</sup> 1880 Census; *Wake: Capital County*, Vol. 2, 38; Vol. 1, 645.

<sup>31</sup> Crow et al., 97.

<sup>32</sup> *Wake Capital County of North Carolina*, Vol. 1, 645; Vol. 2, 39.



imposing building in the place [Oberlin village] is the new graded school. That building is of wood about 100 x 30 ft., attractively painted and well furnished.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Jim Crow Self-Sufficiency 1890s – 1960s**

After Oberlin village’s remarkable growth from the late 1860s to the end of the century, the pace of growth slowed in the early 1900s; however the community matured into a stable, prosperous, largely African American suburb of Raleigh during the Jim Crow segregation era that ended in the 1960s. Oberlin first received a post office in 1892, but it was discontinued in 1894.<sup>34</sup> The most impressive buildings now standing along Oberlin Road date from ca. 1890 to 1911. Rev. Plummer T. Hall built his parsonage at 814 Oberlin Road and brickmason Willis Graves built his house at 802 Oberlin Road around 1890. About 1900, Wilson Morgan built his son James, a bricklayer, and his wife Rosa, a washerwoman, a substantial two-story house at 1015 Oberlin Road.<sup>35</sup> Around 1910 John and Mary Turner enlarged their small 1880s house at 1002 Oberlin Road into the most impressive two-story house in the village core. The early 1900s saw the replacement of the first frame church sanctuaries and frame school by permanent, stylish buildings. In 1896, the Oberlin High School department held its Thanksgiving exercises in First Baptist Church (Oberlin Baptist Church) in the “pleasant little village of Oberlin.”<sup>36</sup> In 1910-11, the Wilson Temple AME Church congregation built a splendid new brick Gothic Revival-style church 1023 Oberlin Road on the site of their original frame sanctuary.

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<sup>33</sup> *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, Dec. 17, 1884; *Wake Capital County of North Carolina*, Vol. 2, 39.

<sup>34</sup> Murray and Johnson, *Wake Capital County*, II, 689.

<sup>35</sup> *Culture Town*, 22.

<sup>36</sup> “Oberlin School,” *The Gazette*, Raleigh, Dec. 5, 1896)

The earliest image of Oberlin's built environment, the 1914 Sanborn Insurance Map, represents the community's second stage, after the original large rural lots of the pioneers had been subdivided to create a denser streetscape along Oberlin Road. By this time, the village contained side residential streets which had been named with numbers, First through Fifth Streets, extending west for one or two blocks, with the north-south avenues of Second Avenue (now Tower Street) and First Avenue (now Chamberlain Street) connecting these side streets. Houses stood close together with large rear lots with outbuildings, interspersed by a few small stores in front.<sup>37</sup> The platting of the side streets must have occurred in a piecemeal fashion as a search of city plats failed to turn up a single plat map for these streets before the 1920s with the exception of First Street. In 1874 the N. C. Agricultural Society platted First Street (present-day Stafford Street) into twelve lots to serve as the road leading from Oberlin Road to the east entrance of the new N. C. State Fairgrounds (Wake County DB47, 588). A second plat of the lots, made in 1904 (Book of Maps 1885, page 54) shows that the street was named Lincoln Street, and an alley bisecting the lots named Emancipation Alley. About 1927, Lincoln became Stafford Street in honor of Gaston Stafford, the fair's supervisor.

The still rural village adjoined white housing in the new subdivision of Cameron Park at the south end of Oberlin Road, yet was socially, agriculturally, and economically largely self-sufficient. Most families raised some food with vegetable gardens, chickens and hogs. Residents fondly recall small frame grocery stores in front of dwellings that sold staples as well as candy treats. A. B. Pettiford owned a general store in Oberlin in

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<sup>37</sup> Sanborn Insurance Map of Raleigh, 1914, sheets 71 and 72. Accessed on microfilm, N. C. State Archives, Raleigh.

the 1890s.<sup>38</sup> John Turner had a store beside his house in the 1910s.<sup>39</sup> Among the stores in the 1930s were Height's Store, 1213 Oberlin Road, Rosa Morgan's Store, 1015 Oberlin Road, and Annie Hester's Store, 1212 Oberlin Road.<sup>40</sup>

Although city growth crept closer, Oberlin's black identity remained intact. In 1916, the old frame school was acquired by the Raleigh Township School Committee and replaced by a modern two-story brick segregated public school of eight classrooms, a library and an auditorium.<sup>41</sup> Oberlin's black social organizations remained intact during the Jim Crow era. Mentor Masonic Lodge No. 55 met in Oberlin by about 1887. By the mid-1900s a number of Oberlin men belonged to the "Widow's Son Masonic Lodge near downtown Raleigh, or to the Odd Fellows fraternal order. Some Oberlin women belonged to the Daughters of Oberlin, whose lodge hall stood on the west side of the 700-block of Oberlin Road until at least 1965.<sup>42</sup>

Oberlin's most famous native son, Dr. James E. Shepard, was born on Oberlin Road in 1875. He founded several important African American institutions of education and finance in the nearby city of Durham during the Jim Crow era. With John Merrick, Shepard established the N. C. Mutual Insurance Company and the Farmers & Mechanics Bank in Durham in the late 1890s. He became one of the wealthiest and most successful

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<sup>38</sup> *Wake Capital County of North Carolina*, Vol. 2, 39, 690.

<sup>39</sup> Wyatt, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Oberlin, Wake County, North Carolina 1865-1952*, E21; Wyatt, "John T. and Mary Turner House National Register Nomination, 8.1.

<sup>40</sup> Virginia Morgan Blount interview, *Culture Town: Life in Raleigh's African American Communities*, Linda Simmons-Henry and Linda Harris Edmisten, 19-21.

<sup>41</sup> Ernie Wood, "Method, Oberlin Areas Hold to Identities," *News and Observer*, Raleigh, April 23, 1974.

<sup>42</sup> Crow et al., *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*, 97; Murray and *Wake Capital County*, II, 688; Joe Holt Jr. interview; 1965 Hill's Raleigh City Directory.

African American businessmen in the United States. In 1909, Shepherd founded and served as first president of the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua, which became the first public liberal arts institution for African Americans in the nation and is now North Carolina Central University. He remained president of NCCU until his death in 1947.<sup>43</sup>

During the 1920s, Oberlin was connected to the city of Raleigh through annexation in 1920 and construction of a white suburb along its west boundary in the late 1920s. The 1922 public works map shows the same street plan as the 1914 Sanborn Map, but includes the area of Oberlin Village to the north called San Domingo (containing the four streets of Grant Avenue, Baez, Butler, and Wade streets.) In 1927, the Parker-Hunter Realty Company, which had developed the Cameron Park subdivision in 1910, platted the Forest Hills subdivision that extended east to Chamberlain Street and connected with First, Second, Third, and Fifth Streets. First Street became Stafford Avenue; Second became Everett Avenue; Third had been named Joint Street and became Bedford Avenue; and Fifth had been named Barker Street and became Van Dyke Avenue, names associated with the State Fair and with N. C. State College.<sup>44</sup> Fourth Street was named Roberts Lane for Rev. N. F. Roberts, Shaw University professor and member of the county board of education, at an unknown date.<sup>45</sup> Forest Hills, with restrictive deed covenants prohibiting African American ownership, blocked Oberlin Village's expansion to the west.

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<sup>43</sup> [www.blackpast.org](http://www.blackpast.org), accessed Apr. 9, 2012. Dr. James E. Shepard (1875-1947).; [www.nccu.edu/discover/](http://www.nccu.edu/discover/). Accessed Dec. 6, 2016.

<sup>44</sup> Wake County Deed Book 576, 358 and 363, C. L. Mann Maps, [www.wakegov.com](http://www.wakegov.com); see Forest Hills plat map of 1926, C. L. Mann Maps, Wake County Register of Deeds.

<sup>45</sup> Murray, *Wake Capital County*, I, 644.

Residents of Oberlin, many of whom were second or third generation, lived comfortable lives within the rigid bounds of segregation. Current older citizens recall the community as close-knit and neighborly. Men often practiced the trade of their fathers, particularly brick masonry and carpentry. Many women kept house, worked as domestics and laundresses, and a number taught school. Grandison Turner's daughter Belle was a teacher in 1920; later teachers included Minnie Turner Williams, Roberta Parham, and Gladys Turner.<sup>46</sup> Mable Patterson, a retired schoolteacher who lives in the same Oberlin Road 1920s bungalow where she grew up, well remembers her grandfather, Seaton Gales Turner, an Oberlin resident and an early African American mail carrier in Raleigh. He worked at the College Station Post Office across from N.C. State University. He owned various parcels of land and rental houses in the village. In spite of their comfortable middle-class status, his wife Mildred Lucas Turner was a laundress who specialized in the white shirts worn by attorneys who lived in nearby Hayes Barton.<sup>47</sup> In 1930, James and Rosa Morgan's son Wilson W. Morgan also practiced the bricklayer trade like his father.<sup>48</sup>

Willis Briggs's history of Oberlin Village, printed in *The News and Observer* on August 8, 1948, is a valuable essay on the community's golden age prior to being absorbed into Raleigh. Briggs called Oberlin the premier African American suburb of Raleigh. The village had a population of approximately 1,000, housed in about 100 residences along Oberlin Road and about seventy-five houses along the streets to the

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<sup>46</sup> 1920 U.S. Census, population schedule, Wake County; various interviews with Oberlin residents.

<sup>47</sup> Mable Patterson interview, Nov. 18, 2016.

<sup>48</sup> 1930 U. S. Census, population schedule, Wake County; 1920 U. S. Census, population schedule, Wake County.

west. He reported that its citizens were “esteemed by both races for their industry, frugality and high character. Oberlin has ever been free from disorder: not a single recalled major crime stains its record.”<sup>49</sup> The 1950 Sanborn Map depicts the built environment at the height of its black development, with houses hugging the streets and large open interior blocks. Development along side streets extended two blocks to Chamberlain Street. Bedford Avenue and Roberts streets were unpaved, and Mayview Road did not exist.<sup>50</sup>

### **Losing Its Identity: 1960s-2016**

After the end of World War II, the urbanization of Oberlin Road caused a gradual loss of neighborhood character and community disintegration, including outmigration, conversion of family homes into rental property, and demolition resulting in a number of vacant lots. When parents died, often without wills, their heirs no longer wanted to live in the neighborhood and sold their homeplaces. By the mid-1960s, the Civil Rights movement, the encroachment of Raleigh, and the rezoning of land along Oberlin Road for commercial usage began to erode the village’s identity as an independent African American community. The construction of Cameron Village, Raleigh’s first mixed-use shopping, office, and residential development (beginning in 1948 on the wooded Smallwood family tract east and south of Oberlin Village) hugely impacted the quality of life there. The 1950 Sanborn Map showed the superblock apartment buildings of Cameron Village just one block east of Oberlin Road. Although it did not encroach upon

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<sup>49</sup> Briggs, “Oberlin Village Emerged During Reconstruction.”

<sup>50</sup> 1950 Sanborn Map, Raleigh, sheet 71. <http://sanborn1proquest.com>, accessed Nov. 18, 2016.

the village's boundaries, it led to spill-over commercial buildings on Oberlin Road between Hillsborough Street and Everett Avenue. Outside the district boundaries to the north and south, both sides of Oberlin Road from Hillsborough Street on the south and Wade Avenue on the north have been redeveloped with commercial and institutional buildings since 1948.

At the north end of Oberlin Village, construction from about 1960 to 1965 of Wade Avenue, a suburban modern four-lane expressway, resulted in the condemnation of all the houses along a short street east of Oberlin Road called Wade Road. The dislocation forced out a number of families in the name of urban renewal. Mrs. Mary Jones, a Wade Road refugee, had a small new house built at 2212 Bedford Avenue at that time. Other village houses in the 1000-1100 blocks of Oberlin Road south of the Wade Avenue overpass were also demolished at that time, whether through eminent domain or piecemeal acquisition and demolition.

The integration of Raleigh's public schools during the 1960s profoundly altered Oberlin's independence. Joe and Elwyn Holt, who lived at 1018 Oberlin Road in front of Oberlin Cemetery, made the first important step towards school integration from 1956 to 1960 to allow their son Joe Holt Jr. to attend nearby Broughton High School instead of Ligon High School, the African American school across town. The case was held up in court until after Joe graduated.<sup>51</sup> Due to the dislocations of integration, attendance

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<sup>51</sup> "The Joseph Holt Family," <http://ncheritagecalendar.com/honorees/the-joseph-holt-family-2/>, accessed Nov. 24, 2016.

plummeted at the Oberlin Graded School: it closed in 1968 and was demolished in 1969.<sup>52</sup>

Demolition of the Oberlin School led to the first large commercial intrusion in the heart of Oberlin Village. In 1974 the YWCA was built at 1012 Oberlin Road on the school site, in front of the Oberlin Cemetery. The Y closed down in the early 2000s and the building is now the offices of Interact, a social services agency. The remaining village fabric along Oberlin Road stood intact until the York Properties Building went up at 801 Oberlin Road about 1984, replacing several dwellings.

The next destruction of Oberlin Road's streetscape occurred about 2000. A large mixed-use commercial and residential development, Oberlin Court, was built at 1028 Oberlin Road, extending to the rear to Wade Avenue. About the same time the Greenlee Dental Center, 1018 Oberlin Road, a sizeable one-story commercial building, was constructed on the south side of Oberlin Court. In addition to the intrusive visual impact to Oberlin Road, this construction led to the destruction of Cemetery Road, the access lane from Oberlin Road to the Oberlin Cemetery. At some point in the late twentieth century, developers had attempted to close the road, but J. W. Willie York sent out men and equipment to rebuild it.<sup>53</sup> However, during construction of these two new buildings, developers bulldozed the driveway that ran along their mutual boundary into a hilly shape and erected electrical equipment. Although a thirteen-foot access road between these two properties still appears on the cemetery tax map, it is now impassable. The only access to

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<sup>52</sup> Ernie Wood, "Method, Oberlin Areas Hold to Identities," *News and Observer*, Raleigh, April 23, 1974.

<sup>53</sup> Tulia H. Turner interview, *Culture Town*, 32.



the cemetery is now the parking lot of the Interact building at 1012 Oberlin Road, but no formal access easement exists.

The most recent blow to Oberlin's architectural character was the loss of the Latta House, 1001 Parker Street, in a 2007 fire. The house was the last structure associated with Latta University in the 1890s and early 1900s. More new commercial development is now planned along Oberlin Road within the boundary of the proposed Oberlin Village Historic Overlay District. The proposed district is fighting for its existence.

### **Architectural Analysis**

In 1948, Willis Briggs counted 100 African American dwellings standing along Oberlin Road from Hillsborough Street to the north of present day Wade Avenue, and about 75 dwellings occupied by blacks stretched along side streets to the west. This historic district report documents what remains in 2016: thirteen dwellings from 802 to 1027 Oberlin Road and twenty dwellings in the blocks not yet heavily disrupted by new infill houses on the side streets of Bedford, Roberts, and Van Dyke. In addition, Oberlin Road retains two historic churches, a cemetery, one store, and the Latta House and Latta University Site on Parker Street, a total of forty-one historic resources to bear witness to the largest and most intact freedman's colony in North Carolina. Three buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the Hall House, the Turner House, and the Graves House. These are also designated as Raleigh Historic Landmarks, along with Wilson Temple, the Morgan House, Oberlin Cemetery, and the Latta House and Latta University Site.

Wilson Temple United Methodist Church, 1023 Oberlin Road, built in 1910-1911, stands as the most architecturally significant landmark in Oberlin. Its stylish brick Gothic-Revival sanctuary features two street entrances with stained glass transoms and tall tripartite stained glass windows dedicated to the founders of Oberlin Village on the façade and side elevations. Set on a raised basement that held the original fellowship hall and kitchen, this church edifice represents the spiritual center of the village, where current descendants of village pioneers still worship and serve the community to the present. Across the street stands the 1955 sanctuary of the Oberlin Baptist Church, a replacement of its late nineteenth-century frame sanctuary. Its more plain brick construction also incorporates a basement meeting hall and kitchen where community gatherings still hold the diaspora of Oberlin descendants together. Behind the Interact building lies the three-acre Oberlin Cemetery, the village's sacred ground where some 600 of its residents lie under monuments dating from 1876 to 2006, and under possible pre-Civil War slave gravestones. The one surviving grocery store, the Community Deli, 903 Oberlin Road, has provided food and social interaction for over a century.

None of the first generation of Oberlin houses, built from the late 1860s to the 1880s, has survived. The Debnam House, 807 Oberlin Road, pictured in Willis Briggs's 1948 *News and Observer* article, was likely typical of the first phase houses but has been demolished. It was a small, plain two-story frame vernacular style house with a front porch. The current architectural landscape represents the flowering of the village from about 1890 to the 1960s.

For a small district, the surviving dwellings represent the full spectrum of house types popular from about 1890 to the 1960s in African American neighborhoods. These types are late 1800s Queen Anne-style houses; early 20<sup>th</sup> century two-story stylish vernacular houses; the shotgun house, the bungalow, and the popular post-World War II Tudor Revival, Ranch, and Split Level houses. The two oldest intact houses in the district, the Willis Graves House, 802 Oberlin Road, and the Plummer T. Hall House, 814 Oberlin Road, probably date from ca. 1890. Both are vernacular versions of the stylish Queen Anne style popular from the 1880s to about 1910. Graves, a brickmason, built a two-story frame house reflecting a vernacular interpretation of the popular Queen Anne style. Its picturesque architectural details, including a wraparound porch with decorative brackets and spindles, stained glass windows, a two-story cutaway bay window, and a roof turret, announced Graves's status as a successful artisan. The cutaway bay window and the roof turret are particularly charming because of their vernacular, ungrammatical form: the bay creates a hipped roof on the north end; the turret projects from the façade separately from the roof gable of the south end. The Hall House, a more mainstream version of the popular Queen Anne style, features turned and bracketed porch posts, a corner porch gazebo, and a corner office room with bay window added about 1900. The John and Mary Turner House, 1002 Oberlin Road, is the largest, most stately historic dwelling in the district. The original ca. 1889 one-story frame house was overbuilt about 1910 with an imposing two-story frame front addition with a wraparound porch, a central porch balcony, and a late example of the Queen Anne angled bay window on the south end.

Four examples of the important tri-gable house type, a one-story side-gabled frame house, one room deep, with a decorative front gable and a wide front porch, stand at 2206 and 2306 Bedford Avenue, 1001 Oberlin Road, and 2207 Roberts Street, all built in the early 1900s. These folk or vernacular houses, a simplified form of the Picturesque Cottage with a steep center front gable popularized by A. J. Downing in the mid-1800s, were widely popular in North Carolina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but are increasingly rare today. Carpenters added the raised central gable to give this utilitarian house a picturesque touch.<sup>54</sup>

The shotgun is a late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup>-century vernacular house type, one room wide and multiple rooms deep, with a front gable roof and no hallway. The type is characteristic of rental houses in many black and white neighborhoods because the narrow form fits a narrow lot. The two examples in the district, 2215 Bedford Avenue and 2307 Van Dyke Avenue, have a shotgun form--a front-gabled house with a door and one window in the façade--but the original floor plans may have included a side hall, in which case these represent side-hall house types.

The Craftsman bungalow, the most popular house type in North Carolina from the 1910s to the 1940s, is a one-story house, two rooms wide and two to three rooms deep, with a deep hip or gabled roof. The type has a wide front porch and front dormer window. Three of the six examples in Oberlin Village: 903, 905, and 907 Oberlin Road, are nearly identical side-gabled bungalows with nearly full porches with brick and wood

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<sup>54</sup>For a two-story version of this house type, see Bishir and Southern, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina*, Figure 41, page 44.

posts and a prominent front dormer window. Built about 1923, these were likely speculative houses. The bungalows at 2210 Bedford Avenue and 2206 and 2210 Van Dyke Avenue are front-gabled or side-gabled forms with characteristic brick and wood porch posts.

The Tudor Revival and Minimal Traditional styles appear in the district in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The ca. 1948 Williams House, 1019 Oberlin Road, is the only historic example of the Tudor Revival style that attracted those who could afford it from the 1930s to the early 1950s. The substantial brick house features a stone entrance bay and a steep side-gabled roof with robust gabled dormers. Leonidas Haywood, principal of Oberlin School, hired P. R. White, a white builder, to build his small side-gabled brick Minimal Traditional-style house at 1027 Oberlin Road in 1952. This style, less expensive than the Tudor Revival, represents a stripped-down version of earlier Colonial Revival-style houses. The name derived from the minimal house that most people could afford, enriched with a few traditional features, popular until the Ranch house came along in the early 1950s.

The Ranch house, the dominant house type in the district, is a low, wide one-story form, often of brick, with a large picture window in the living room and a small entrance porch or recessed entrance rather than a front porch. The seven Ranches stand at 2208, 2212 and 2214 Bedford, 710 Chamberlain, 1011 Oberlin, 2208 Roberts, and 2303 Van Dyke. Young professional black couples built these in the district in the 1950s-1960s, proof of the continued desirability of the neighborhood after World War II. These modern

houses probably replaced older frame houses. At least one of them, the Mary A. Jones House, 2212 Bedford Avenue, was built for an older resident whose home had been condemned for construction of the Wade Avenue expressway about 1960. Delma Hall, a grandson of Plummer T. Hall, hired a white contractor to build a Ranch house at 710 Chamberlain Street like one that he admired in Raleigh's North Hills subdivision. The Robert Turner House at 1011 Oberlin Road is a vernacular Ranch with an unusual corner bay window and window recesses in the front and rear. The only historic Split-Level in the district was built by a pair of educators—John and Roberta Parham, in 1966 at 2312 Bedford Avenue. Cauthen Realty and Construction Company, who had purchased the lot in 1964, built the mid-century modern house for the Parhams, likely from a mail order plan.

### **Special Character Essay**

Oberlin Village Historic Overlay District possesses architectural significance for its unusually wide variety of late nineteenth and early-twentieth-century house types for a small district. The styles and types include Queen Anne, vernacular tri-gable, shotgun, Craftsman bungalow, Tudor Revival, Minimal Traditional, Ranch, and Split-level. Unlike the standard versions of these popular styles and types in white neighborhoods, those in Oberlin tend to be vernacular versions not present in plans distributed in popular publications, whether catalogues, magazines, newspapers, or mail order outlets. African American historic districts in North Carolina often present more vernacular versions of popular house types than are found in white historic districts.

The street design and landscape of Oberlin Village has a special character quite distinct from the surrounding more affluent white neighborhoods of West Raleigh. Because it was planned piecemeal over decades rather than designed as a planned community, its streets evolved over time and have differing characters. The wide main street of Oberlin Road, a long-time country road along the highest ridge in west Raleigh before being developed as an African American rural village, constitutes the district's spine. Its sidewalks serve many pedestrians and bicyclists; its bus stops are heavily used. The narrow side streets include through-streets, cul-de-sacs, and unpaved lanes, none with sidewalks. A canopy of oaks, pecans, magnolias and cedar trees create a lush atmosphere. Lots are quite small, with 50 x 150 foot lots of one-fifth-acre being the norm. Driveways are generally unpaved and often shared between neighbors. Many rear yards have high board fences for privacy.

Oberlin's porches constitute one of its most characteristic and picturesque architectural elements. The wraparound porches of the Willis Graves House and John and Mary Turner House have painted blue ceilings, a folk tradition said to keep away flies. Many of the district's porches contain alterations that are particularly characteristic of African American neighborhoods, such as replacement concrete floors, often paved with terra cotta tiles, replacement decorative metal porch posts, even for the upper sections of bungalow porch posts, installed in the mid-twentieth century, and vintage metal awnings that add to the shade of the porch roofs.

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**Interviews conducted by M. Ruth Little**

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Holt, Joseph Jr. November 3, 2016.

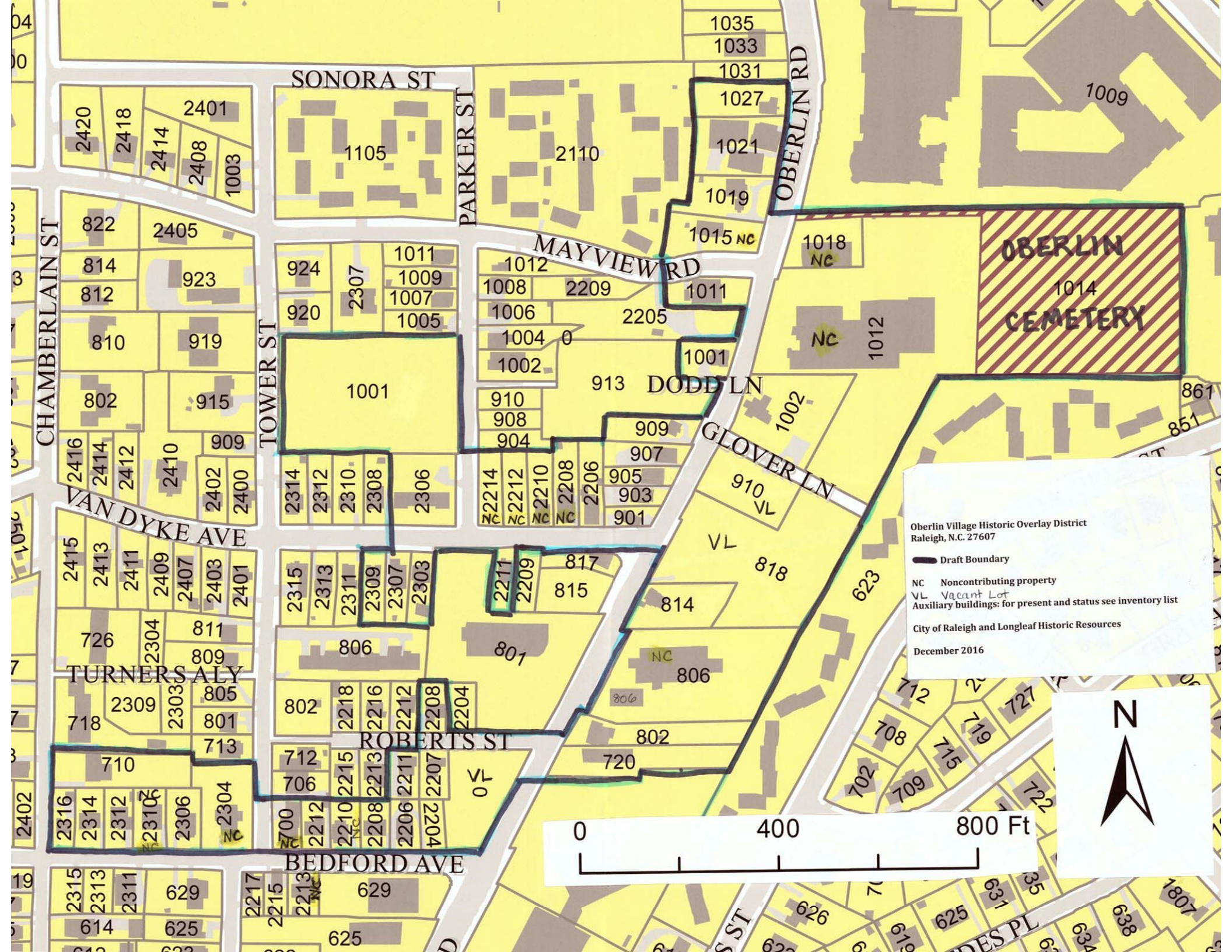
Morgan, Joyce. November 6, 2016.

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Oberlin Village Historic Overlay District  
Raleigh, N.C. 27607

 Draft Boundary

NC Noncontributing property  
VL Vacant Lot  
Auxiliary buildings: for present and status see inventory list

City of Raleigh and Longleaf Historic Resources  
December 2016

































